Mrs. White.

Farce in one act.

By

J. R. Raymond

1836

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Mrs White.

Mrs WHITE. Oh! Oh! I'm going – I'm going –

MAJOR (not looking) Well, go, ma'am go!

Mrs WHITE. Oh! Oh! (she sinks upon him so that he is compelled to support her)

MAJOR. S'death! Ma'am! Ma'am! cant you postpone it till you get in doors, Ma'am! (at this moment Peter White appears behind)

Scene last.

MRS. WHITE.

A FARCE.

IN

One Act.

BY R. J. RAYMOND,

Author of Robert the Devil, Old Oak Tree, Balance of Comfort, P.S.—Come to Dinner, Cherry Bounce, Deuce is in Her, Emigrant's Daughter, &c.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,

WELLINGTON STREET, STRAND,

LONDON.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Major Pepper	Mr. Williams
Frank Brown	Mr. Hemming
Peter White	Mr. Oxberry
Widow White	Miss Novello
Mrs. White	Mrs. F Matthews
Kitty Clover	Mrs. Keeley

First produced at the English Opera House, July 1836,
Time of Representation, 1 hour.

COSTUME.

Major Pepper—Blue military frock coat, white trowsers, cap, and stick.
Frank—Modern frock coat, white trowsers, and riding whip.
Peter White—Brown short tailed coat white waistcoat, nankeen trowsers, short gaiters, small Opera rush hat, white cravat, tied with large bow.
Widow White—Plain white dress, Second dress. Blue riding habit, blue cap, riding whip.
Mrs. White—White muslin dress over a pink petticoat, fashionable bonnet with two large feathers, green veil, boa, very small parasol
Kitty Clover—Coloured chintz gown, white muslin apron, white cap, with coloured ribbon.

MRS. WHITE.

SCENE.—*Richmond Hill, with a Bird's-eye view of the Thames, winding through the distant Country. To the right, a small Cottage. To the left a small Villa or Cottage Orne, projecting somewhat on the Stage with a practicable door and Casement. In the background, to the left, a practicable sloping hill.—Morning.*

Enter FRANK BROWN *and* KITTY CLOVER, *from the Cottage,* R. H.

Frank. Nay, my dear Kitty, consider——

Kit. I do consider—the *consequences,* Mr. Brown; and as my old master, Squire Bramble, of Tantivy Hall, Somersetshire, used to say to I—"Consequences, Kitty, should always be considered"—So I do think it would be very wrong of I to disturb *Mrs. White* so early, seeing that she be come down from Lunnun to Richmond for change of air, and has taken that pretty cottage, opposite mine, on purpose that I should be near her.—Besides, *why* should I disturb her? you bean't a *relation* of hers—[*Significantly.*]

Frank. 'Tis of the utmost consequence that I should speak with her immediately, and if you really love her, Kitty——

Kit. Ah! that I do, dearly! Wern't we little girls together when my mother was housekeeper to her father, old Squire Bramble; and didn't I come up with her to Lunnun, after his death, and remain in her service till I got married, and settled here at Richmond, where I take in children to nurse, while my good man goes a farming; and sorry enough I were to

leave her, for she led a sad life with the rich old man she were obligated by her father's will to marry, because the old gentlemen happened to be schoolfellows. I were to have nursed their first offspring, but were disappointed, for what with the gout, and the rhumatiz, and his friends' *jokes* at his 'sponsing a wife young enough to be his grand-daughter, the poor old gentleman died in the *honey moon*!

Frank. Ha! ha! and thus was your charming mistress left a *widow* at *nineteen*; but not, I hope, with a *distaste* for *matrimony*.

Kit. La! bless you, no, sir! she a'nt had experience enough yet! [*archly*] But as she be now free to choose for *herself* she ought to have a husband of her own age —

Frank. Capable of appreciating her virtues and talents.

Kit. Kind.—

Frank. Affectionate.

Kit. And complaisant, never saying *no*——

Frank. Yes.

Kit. When she says *yes* —

Frank. No! in short, Kitty, a *good husband*.

Kit. Which be as scarce to find———

Frank. As a good *wife*, Kitty!

Kit. No more scarcer! I be bound to speak up for my sex, you know!

Frank. Well then, Kitty, I know just such a one.

Kit. (*Quickly.*) what, a *good husband*, sir?

Frank. (*Smiling.*) Yes.

Kit. La! do pray show him to I, sir—(*with great naivete.*) I be so fond o' *curiosities*! [*Frank laughs.*] Where be he, sir?

Frank. Near at hand.

Kit. (*Aside.*) Yes, at my elbow, or I'm much mistaken! [*aloud.*] And have I ever seen him, sir?

Frank. Often.

Kit. (*Archly.*) La! you don't say so, sir! Stay, now I think on't, he be *young*.—

Frank. About my own age.

Kit. *Tolerably* good looking——

Frank. (*Arranging his Cravat.*) Ahem!

Kit. And he comes to Richmond every day to my cottage, where he has hired a room for *change of air*, as *he says*——.

Frank. Exactly (*Smiling.*)

Kit. And his name be—Mr. Francis Brown Esq. Ha! ha! you be found out and discovered, you see, sir, [*Laughing.*]

Frank. Ha! ha! why Kitty, you're as shrewd as a *Lord Mayor*.

Kit. Come, that be no great compliment neither! but I can see as far into a mill stone as my neighbours; so you may as well confide in I at once, sir.

Frank. Well, then, to be candid, Kitty, I do love the charming widow, and reioice to add that our affection is *reciprocal*.

Kit. Reci-pro! oh! I understand! she gives you as good as you bring—well, then, the way to church be as smooth as a *rail road*.

Frank. Sdeath, no! there's a plaguy stumbling block in the path, in the shape of a peppery old uncle of mine, on whom I am dependent, and who is a determined enemy to *wedlock*.

Kit. Ah! those crusty old bachelors! As my master used to say, "an old bachelor is like "——

Frank. On the contrary, he is a *Widower* of *three wives*.

Kit. Three! what *a Blue Beard!* Did he marry 'em for *love* or *money*, sir?

Frank. For the *latter*, I imagine, from the miserable life he led with them.

Kit. Serve him right, the old *cormorant*.

Frank. You now perceive the necessity of my immediately seeing the widow; my uncle will arrive this very morning from Devonshire, and if I am not in Town to receive him—— [*Here the Widow is heard singing inside the cottage*, L. H.] Hark! tis she!

Kit. That be her sweet voice sure enough,—don't it make your heart beat, sir?

Frank. Double quick time, Kitty!

Enter WIDOW WHITE *singing from a sheet of Music which she carries in her hand.* KITTY *enters the Widow's Cottage.*

Wid (*Singing.*) La! la! la! a very charming composition indeed! [*Sees* Frank.] Bless me, you here already, Frank? Why you must have been "*Up in the morning early*," as the old song says!

Frank. In truth, Clarissa, I hav'nt *slept* all night.

Wid. A visit from "*Queen Mab*," vulgarly called the "*Night Mare*," perhaps [*Laughingly.*]

Frank. Yes, in the shape of a respectable elderly gentleman!

Wid. Ha! I understand, your *Uncle!* and is he become civilized, or as much averse to matrimony as ever.

Frank. More than ever, if I may judge from his last letter, in which he threatens to *cashier* me, if I disobey him [*Emphatically.*] But he shall find me as obstinate as himself.—*Let* him *disinherit* me—I'll marry you without a shilling in my pocket, upon my soul I will Clarissa. [*She laughs.*] No, no, I mean if you had not a shilling in the world.—

Wid. I have already told you that, happy as I should be to be called your *wife*, I will not consent to purchase the title at the price of your uncle's displeasure; for despite his eccentricities, he has, you confess, been ever most kind to you.

Frank. And you love me, Clarissa?

Wid. Can I give you a stronger proof of my attachment?

Frank. Yes.

Wid. How?

Frank. By allowing me to introduce you to him.

Wid. Wherefore, pry'thee?

Frank. Let him but see and hear you.

Wid. (*Smiling*) You pretend I should make a convert of him—Flatterer!

Frank. Nay, I'm certain of it. [*Emphatically and rapidly.*] I present you to him, he is struck by your beauty, and will consent to our union, and carry us down to his estate in Devonshire, where we shall live like "Love among the Roses."

Wid. A very captivating extempore romance, indeed! you are for illustrating "*Darby* and *Joan*." I see! But 'twill be time enough to settle these matters when we are married—if we ever should be, ha! ha!

Enter KITTY *from the* Widow's *Cottage.*

Kit. I've been helping Susan, ma'am, and breakfast be ready—I've laid it for *two*, ma'am.

Wid. (*Smiling.*) For two, Kitty—wherefore?

Kit. (*Archly.*) Because you be so hospitable, ma'am; and as Mr. Brown has rode all the way from Lunnun this morning, I thought as how—[Widow *laughs.*]

Frank. "Sweet Kitty Clover," your attention is praiseworthy. But no ceremony Clarissa, I beg—I shall be perfectly satisfied with Bachelor's fare!

Wid. (*Laughing*) Oh! the Bread and the Cheese are quite at your disposal, but the *third* article can be purchased only at the price of your liberty.

Frank. Secure my hand then, and make me your prisoner for life! [*Exit with* Widow, *into cottage*, L. H.

Kit. (*Laughingly*) Bachelor's fare! Bread and Cheese an

Kisses! oh my—[*Looking after them.*] Ah, they'll make a comfortable couple—not like Mr. and Mrs. White, the parents of the baby I be nursing—they be always quarrelling about the brat. Mr. White be so proud of being a father, that he'd willingly proclaim it to all the world by beat of drum; while his wife wishes nobody to know she be married. By the bye, she be a namesake of my dear young *missus*, the widow; but la! no more like her than Mr. Brown be like Mr. White. I expect the loving couple to day from Lunnun to see their offspring. Heigho! I feel rather melancholic and musical this morning.

SONG—KITTY.

To the fields I carried my milking can,
All in a morning early,
And there I met with a smart young man,
Who vow'd he lov'd me dearly.
I made him a curtsey, he made me a bow,
He kiss'd me, and promis'd to marry, I vow—
I wish that young fellow was with me just now
On a May day morning early!

I strive to forget him, but all in vain,
On a May day morning early!
And if I never should see him again,
'Twould break my heart, or nearly!
I can't bear the sight of a sheep or a cow—
I want to get married, yet cannot tell how,
I wish that young fellow was with me just now,
On a May day morning early!

[*A horn is heard without.*] That be the omnibus [*Ascends the stage and looks out* L. H.] And there be Mr. and Mrs. White sure enough, crawling up the hill—I must run and put a clean cap on the baby. [*Exit into cottage.*

PETER WHITE *appears* U. E. R. H *on the hill, carrying a* Child s *drum, a wooden horse, a small bundle, and his wife's boa, hanging over his shoulder.*

Pet. (*As he enters.*) Isn't it hot!—I'm all over *porous*! [*Turns and speaks off.*] Take it easy, my dear Clemmy—I'd have made the driver bowl us up the hill, but he appealed to my humanity for his *hosses* sake! and certainly fifteen inside, beside himself and the cad, is no joke in the dog days for the poor *hanimals*.

Enter MRS. WHITE *carrying a very small open parasol, and fanning herself with her handkerchief—she is dressed vulgarly fine, and speaks affectedly.*

Mrs. W. The saints be praised, we are up at last.

Pet. Yes, as Douglas says. [*Throws himself into an attitude and declaims.*]

" The hill they climb'd, and halting at its top,
" Of more than mortal height, towering, they seem'd
" An host *H*angelic clad in burning *H*arms."

Mrs. W. Again, Mr. White, after my strict *conjunctions* ! [*They descend.*]

Pet. It's the force of habit, my love. I can't help now and then quoting certain passages which *solicited* such applause, when I was a *h*amateur *h*actor in the private theatre in Ranter Street.

Mrs. W. (*Laughing contemptuously.*) *Rubbage !* a tragedian with such a figure—ridiculous !

Pet. Why I must own my friends said it was better suited to *low comedy* than *high* tragedy.

Mrs. W. This *force* of habit as you call it, is constantly exposing you to ridicule ; remember your conduct in the omnibus to day, when you sat along side o' that young woman.

Pet. I only tip'd her a bit o' *Romeo.* [*Laughing.*] Oh, ah ! when I seized hold of the elderly gentleman in the bob wig, exclaiming with *W*irginius—" *My child, my child ! give me back my child !*" I really couldn't help it, my dear—'twas a sudden burst of *natur*, for I was thinking of our dear little *h*offspring.

Mrs. W. You may think of it as much as you please, Mr. White, but I'll trouble you not to proclaim our marriage to all the world. You know how much it concerns our interest to keep it a secret, especially from my old maiden aunt, who, averse to matrimony herself, promises to leave me all her property provided I remain *single.*

Pet Why, certainly, the *mopusses* is a consideration, for the sake of our *hinfantine heir.* By-the-bye, my dear, talking of relations, what is become of your cousin, Mr. Augustus Brown, the *dandy perfumer*, as he was called, who I never saw, but who I'm told used to visit you *anonymously* during my absence when I was a courting you ?

Mrs. W. (*Sentimentally.*) 'Tis long since I have beheld that interesting youth, whose flattering attentions and presents of *Eau de Cologne* excited your absurd jealousy ! [*Emphasising the word Cologne.*]

Pet. Jealousy ! ridiculous ! what after the advice I gave *myself* in *Iago ?* [*Declaims.*] " Beware of jealousy ! it is the green eyed *lobster* which doth make the meat it feeds on." ha ha ! jealous indeed, of a dandy perfumer—ridiculous—

[*Aside.*] If I had caught him tho,' I would have *hannihilated* him.

Mrs. W. Peter, do you love me? [*Sentimentally, leaning on his shoulder.*]

Pet. (*Tragically.*) Love you, Clementina?—I should think so!

Mrs. W. Promise me then to conceal our union. Will you, *dear* Peter? [*Caressing him.*]

Pet. Insinuating Clemmy! But how long, think you, shall I be obliged to *consolidate* in my bosom those parental feelings which are ready to burst forth whenever I think of our "*hin*fant bud of early beauty," as the poet says?

Mrs. W. Not long, Peter; my aunt is very old and very *dropsical.*

Pet. Well, then, I'll wait till she *drops off!*

Mrs. W. Ah! [*Sentimentally.*] now you talk and look as when you came a courting me on Primrose hill. Do you remember that happy time, Peter?

Pet. Do I?—Don't I?

MEDLEY DUET—PETER AND MRS. WHITE.

PETER. Air—"The Guaracha."

Oh, remember the time, when a courting I came,
In hopes your kind favour to catch;
I the spark was, dear Clemmy, and you were the flame,
And between us we lighted a match!

MRS. WHITE. Air—"Voulez vous danser."

And don't you remember, Peter, the day,
When, smartly drest,
All in our best,
We to church rode, joyous, gay,
To be wedded willing?

PETER. [*Same Air.*]

Yes, I remember well the day,
When, both inclin'd,
We were fast jin'd,
For I the parson a guinea did pay,
And the clerk a shilling.

BOTH.

Then to Windsor, in a shay,
From the church we bowl'd away.
Dashing,
Splashing,
Cant'ring,
Bant'ring,
To spend the sweet bridal day.
Yes, I remember, &c.

Mrs. W. (Speaking.) And don't you remember, Peter, what a sweet honeymoon we passed at Greenwich, and how you used to take me to Vauxhall, and the Theatres, and, above all, to the Opera—the charming Opera?

Peter. To improve ourselves in the *h*exquisite *h*arts of singing and dancing, by listening to *Greasy* and *Tamburiny*, and seeing *Toggilouy* and *Coolun*, 'trip it on the light fantastic toe.'

Mrs. W. And then we used to practise at home, and try to imitate them.

Peter. And very well we did it for *h*amateurs.

BOTH. Air—"The Gavotte."

Lal lal la! how *Greasy*-like we sing'd it—
Fal lal la! how *Taglony*-like we wing'd it—
One leg here, t'other leg there,
To be modest pray beware!
To obtain the meed of praise,
Attitude's the thing now-a-days!

(They dance a la Opera.

Enter KITTY CLOVER, *from cottage*, R. H.

Kit. (*Affecting surprise.*) Well, I declare, if here ben't Mr. and Mrs. White.

Pet. Yes, here we are, nurse, loaded wi.h toys for our dear little Peter; not forgetting a lump of sugar and tea for you. [*Gives them.*] How is the dear little fellow?

Kit. Oh, charming, sir—he cut his first tooth yesterday.

Pet. Bless his little gums. [*Crosses* C.] That's a half a crown for you, nurse. [*Gives her money.*]

Kit. Oh, thank'ee, sir. I don't say it for the *money's sake*, but he's a perfect little *nudidity*. [*Pocketing the money.*]

Pet. Lovely bud of early beauty! [*Delighted.*]

Kit. And you ought to be proud of him, sir.

Pet. I am proud of him nurse, *wery* proud.

Kit. Such a sweet temper too: he hasn't cried once since—[*A* Child *heard crying within.*]

Pet. Eh! what's that?

Kit. As sure as fate, now, my little niece has let him fall!

[*Exit* R. H.

Pet. Fall!

Mrs. W. Stupid girl! the dear little fellow may be disfigured for life. [*Hurries into cottage.*]

Pet. (*Follows calling in a crying voice.*) Peter! poor little Peter! [*Rushes into cottage*, R. H.]

Enter FRANK BROWN *from the* Widow's *Cottage.*

Frank. (*Walking to and fro*) All is delightfully arranged! Clarissa consents to see my uncle under an assumed name, and the meeting to appear accidental, as she wisely fears that a

formal introduction as my intended, would fail to conquer his matrimonial prejudices. Now, then, to horse, and away to London to meet him [*Looking out* L. H.] Ah! what do I see! by all that's vexatious, 'tis he himself! How the deuce did he ferret me out here!—no matter, I must brave it out. [*Buttons up his Coat, and walks towards* L. H. *singing* "Over the hills and far away."]

Enter MAJOR PEPPER, *meeting him face to face.*

Maj. Halt! front! stand at ease!

Frank (*Affecting astonishment.*) Eh! can I believe my eyes? My dear uncle! [*Embracing.*] I was hastening to town to meet you—Who, in the name of wonder, informed you I was here?

Maj. Your puppy of a servant, at your chambers in the Temple.

Frank. (*Aside.*) The rascal! after my strict injunctions——

Maj. At first he was as close as a sentinel with the watch word; but a sight of this *real bamboo* soon thaw'd his tongue. [*Shews his cane.*]

Frank. (*Affecting anger.*) Stupid fellow! to make such a mystery of an innocent ride to Richmond. But I'm delighted to see you, uncle, upon my honour I am! [*Taking his hand*] And how are you—but I need not ask. You look the very picture of health. [*With great vivacity.*]

Maj That's more than *you* do; for you look as jaded as a soldier on a forced march. What the deuce ails you, eh? you haven't been running into debt, have you?

Frank. No, uncle, I can't afford it. (*Smiling.*)

Maj. Not a scrape, eh? an intrigue, you sly dog. [*Laughing.*] There's a woman in the question, I'll be sworn! Eh! I remember now—your last two sheets of foolscap-letter was filled with a description of a Widow Wiggins, or White, or some such name, who had cast her magic spells around you. But that vertigo is over, I hope; young people are mostly in love once a year from fifteen to thirty, when they generally come to their senses, as I hope you have.

Frank. Indeed, uncle, I have not.

Pep. Eh? what! you don't mean to say you are seriously infatuated!

Frank. Very seriously indeed, uncle!

Pep. What! in spite of my counsel! and my example?

Frank. I but *follow* it uncle: and having had *three* wives yourself, 'tis very unreasonable in you to deny me *one!*

Pep. You may jest as you please, sir, but beware!—A man may game, intrigue, get over head and ears in debt—in short, run the entire round of folly, and yet redeem himself;—but he is never thoroughly and irreparably undone, till he is *married*—I say it, and *know* it—*Experientia docet.* [*With great emphasis, knocking his cane on the ground.*]

Frank. (*With equal warmth and declaiming a la Barister.*) And I say, Gentlemen and Ladies of the jury, in the present cause of Matrimony *versus* Celibacy; that, with all its little grievances, man knows no *real* happiness until he is married. Let him possess a wife of sense and virtue, and of whom he *himself* is *worthy*—(mark that point, uncle,) and he will feel a solid and permanent joy of which he was never before sensible. Uninterrupted happiness, indeed, no man can, or ought to expect. Life, unlike some *livings*, is no *sinecure*; fruits do not now spring spontaneously from the earth, as they did in the garden, nor does manna drop from the clouds as it did in the wilderness—but, despite the arguments of disappointed old maids and bachelors, in spite of *Malthus* and *Martineau* on *population*; I assert that, as a scheme of solid comfort, matrimony affords, to well regulated minds, a double share of delight in *prosperity*, and a solace and support in *adversity*. [*Wiping his forchead with his handkerchief.*] There, answer that, uncle, if you can. You can't—so huzza! Matrimony wins the day, ha, ha!

Maj. Mad! mad as a March hare! fancies himself spouting in Westminster Hall. Love has turned his brain—zounds! I must take him down into Devonshire, 'twill be all over with him!

Frank. (*Alarmed.*) Eh! what? Devonshiae, uncle?

Maj. Yes, where I hope the change of air, and a few shower baths, will effectually *cool* this plaguy love fever.

Frank. Sdeath! what's to be done now? [*Reflects.*]

Maj. I did intend remaining a few days in town, but for your sake we'll be off by the mail this very night.

Frank. (*Aside.*) Egad, it shall be so; desperate cases require desperate measures!

Maj. So, quick march!—Come along to town, and pack up your knapsack.

Frank. (*Sentimental tone.*) Alas! uncle, it cannot, must not be!

Maj. Indeed! why not pray?

Frank. You are my uncle—my excellent uncle, and the ties

consanguinity are strong; but my duty to *another* is paramount o'er all. [*Sentimentally.*]

Maj. Another?

Frank. Yes, my wife! [*Turns aside his head with affected emotion.*]

Pep. Your wife! why you don't mean to say you are married?

Frank. I am, indeed, uncle! [*Rapidly and emphatically.*] I know the full extent of my disobedience to your commands, but, hurried on by the impetuosity of youth, the violence of my passion, the—the—and despairing to obtain your consent—

Pep. You have made an ass of yourself! And who, pray, is Mrs. Brown?

Frank. Mrs. White, who, for the present, however, retains her name, as she wishes, for family reasons, to keep our union a secret. [*Placing his hand on the* Major's *shoulder.*] And I am assured you will bury it in the inmost recesses of your affectionate bosom. [*Turns aside to laugh.*]

Pep. Nonsense! I wont believe it. Come, come, master Frank, you are acting your part extremely well, but it won't do. We old soldiers are not so easily caught. You want to wheedle me out of my consent, but it wont do, I tell you, ha, ha!

Frank. (*Aside.*) Sdeath! he suspects——

Pep. Ha, ha! I wonder you didn't work it up stronger, by swearing that a sweet little offspring had crown'd your handy work. It would have been a very *natural consequence*, you know, ha, ha!

Frank. (*Aside.*) Egad, and it shall be so. Alas! you now touch upon a tender chord. [*Aloud.*]

Pep. Tender fiddlestick! [Frank *sighs*—Major *looks alarmed.*] Eh! why—why, you don't mean to say you are really. [*At this moment the* child *is heard crying in* Kitty Clover's *cottage.*] Eh? what the devil's that? [Frank, *pretending to be deeply affected, points to the cottage, and places his hand upon his heart, exclaiming sentimentally:*]

Frank. Pardon me, uncle—but the *voice* of *nature*; my feelings are so overcome, that I must withdraw for a few moments. [*Going*—child *cries again.*] Poor babe! [*Half aside.*] Cutting its little dog tooth! [*Exit into* L. H. *house, laughing*

Pep. If it should be all true! [*Going to cottage, stops.*] Oh, here comes a wench. She can tell something about the matter, perhaps.

Enter KITTY CLOVER *hastily*, R. H.

Kit. I wonder if Mr. Brown be gone yet. [*Stops, seeing the* Major.]

Pep. So, so, she knows him. [*Aside.*] Hark'ee, young woman. [*Aloud.*] Didn't I hear a child crying just now?

Kit. Mayhap you might. Some folks ears are *long enough* for anything.

Pep. Who does it belong to?

Kit. Its father and mother, to be sure. [*Aside.*] What an inquisitive old gentleman!

Pep. And who are they?

Kit. Can't tell!

Pep. How so?

Kit. Because I musn't.

Pep. Why not?

Kit. Can you keep a secret? [*Mysteriously.*]

Pep. Yes. [*Getting close to her.*]

Kit. So can I! [*Laughs.*] Ha, ha! you thought to pump I, because I be country bred. But la bless you, sir, there be as many fools in Lunnun as in the country, as *you* must know. [*Going.*]

Pep. But listen——

Kit. I can't; there be Mrs. White calling I. [*Runs into Cottage.*]

Pep Mrs. White! its all true then! that name confirms the melancholy fact. The hypocritical scoundrel! I'll disinherit, and leave him nothing but his wife, and if she proves like any one of the three late Mrs. Peppers, he'll be pretty well punished, I think. [*Walks to and fro.*]

Enter PETER WHITE, *from cottage*, R. H.

Pet. (*Strutting about with his hands in his pockets.*] What a dear little feller! nurse says he's the picture of *me*; ha, ha! lovely *hinfant*!—happy father!

Pep. (*Aside—behind.*) What strutting bantem cock is this, I wonder? He came from the cottage—one of Mrs White's friends, I suppose.

Pet. (*In front to himself.*) We'll have him vaccinated next week, and christened on *my* birth day, the First of April; and ecod! a rare jollification we'll have of it. He's wery *fair*, tho' for a boy. I wish he was a little more *brown*; it looks manly!

Pep. (*Advancing*) Eh? Brown! he knows Frank [*Meeting* Peter *face to face*] What's that you say, sir?

Pet. (*Looking up at him*) Eh? say? why I suppose I'm at liberty to speak of my dear little—godson? [*Aside.*] Ecod! I was near letting the cat out of the bag.

Pep. And are you god-father to the brat?

Pet. Brat! come I say, old gentleman! and what then, pray?

Pep. What then?—why you ought to be ashamed of yourself.

Pet. Ashamed of myself! for what?

Pep. Why, for aiding and abetting in such a disgraceful transaction!

Pet. Disgraceful? [*Aside,*] What does the old codger mean?

Pep. Aye. [*Emphatically, knocking his cane on the ground,*] Do you know to whom the child belongs, sir?

Pet. I should think so.

Pep. Do you know it's father?

Pet. I suspect so. [*Conceitedly*]

Pep. And so do I, sir.

Pet. Wery likely! [*Aside.*] I don't remember his *phisiology* though.

Pet. And I repeat, sir, that it is the offspring of a clandestine, unlawful union.

Pet. Unlawful!

Pep. Yes, sir, contracted without my knowledge or consent

Pet. (*Aside.*) His consent! that's good anyhow.

Pep. In short, sir, 'tis my nephew's child.

Pet. (*Laughing.*) Your nephew's! ha, ha! a capital joke, faith. [*Aside.*] Some wag has been hoaxing the old gudgeon. [*Aloud.*] And who told you so, eh? ha, ha! [*Laughing.*]

Pep. My nephew himself to be sure.

Pet. (*Still laughing*) Your nephew himself, eh? ha, ha! *where* and *when*, pray?

Pep. Here.

Pet. Here?

Pep. On this very spot, not five minutes ago.

Pet. (*Getting alarmed*) Eh! what?

Pep. So you see I know all about the clandestine marriage, and Mrs. White.

Pet. (*More alarmed*) Mrs. White! [*Aside*] A horrid thought flashes on my brain. [*Aloud.*] And your nephew's name is——

Pep Brown.

Pet. Brown! [*Starting*]

Pep. Pshaw! you know it as well as I do.

Pet. (*Aside.*) The *dandy perfumer*, by all that's horrific!

This, then, accounts for the *smell* of lavender water! [*Reels against* Pepper, *who supports him.*]

Pep. What does all this mean? [*Shaking him.*] Sir!—Mr. What's your name?

Pet. (*Aside—recovering.*) My head turns round like a teetotum. [*Tragically.*] This then, accounts for her agitation whenever his name was mentioned. But I'll have deep, dreadful, deadly reparation! Both—both *shall* feel a *hinjured* husband's *wengeance*!

Pep. What the deuce ails him—is he mad?

Pet. (*Rushing up to him*) Hark'ee old gen*tle*man, do you know what Othello says?

Pep. Not I.

Pet (*Clenching his hands at him.*) "See that thou prov'st Mrs White a——you know what—or thou hadst better have been born a dog, Iago—a dog—a dog—a dog!" [*Striding to and fro.*]

Pep. Poor fellow! I suppose he's subject to these fits.

Pet (*Rushing towards the cottage.*) Ha—she comes!

Pep. Who? Mrs. White?

Pet. (*Wildly.*) Yes, that's her, and I am done—Brown, Brown—Brown! [*Strikes his forehead and rushes out,* U. E. R. H.]

Enter MRS. WHITE, *from cottage,* R. H.

Mrs. W. (*Calling after* Peter.) Peter, Peter! where are going? We shall be too late for the omnibus!

Pep. (*Aside—in front, looking at her.*) What, is this the woman Frank said was all loveliness and gentility? A pretty taste he has got. [*Aloud—bluntly.*] Heark'ee, madam!

Mrs. W. (*Astonished.*) Sir!

Pep. You and I must have a little talk together before you go.

Mrs W A little talk together? Really, sir, I hav'n't the pleasure to know you.

Pep. But I know *you*, madam, and I blush for you. Fie, madam! a woman at your time of life!

Mrs. W. At my time of life! what do you mean, sir? I don't understand you, sir.

Pep. Oh, you need not affect ignorance in this, or any other matter, madam. I know all.

Mrs. W. What do you mean, sir? you speak *parregorically*!

Pep. Your clandestine marriage, ma'am! and the little offspring, ma'am!

Mrs. W. (*Aside.*) Oh, gracious goodness! is our secret

discovered? [*Aloud, agitated.*] Marriage, sir? may I ask who your scandalous informer is?

Pep. Your husband himself, ma'am!

Mrs. W. My husband! [*Aside.*] Peter shall smart for this. [*Aloud.*] Well, sir, and if *I am* married, what affair is it of yours, pray?

Pep. 'Sdeath ma'am, I'm your husband's uncle.

Mrs. W. His uncle! what, are you old Mr. Tittlebat, the fishmonger of *Brumagem?*

Pep. Fishmonger?—fiddledee!

Mrs. W. Really, sir, this language——

Pep. Zounds, madam, do you suppose I can take such a matter coolly? I'll disinherit the puppy, if it's only for the falsehoods he told me about you.

Mrs. W. Falsehoods, Mr. Tittlebat?

Pep Yes, he swore you were the *beau ideal* of loveliness and gentility!

Mrs. W. (*Conceitedly.*) Well, sir, and am I not—

Pep. You certainly are *not*, madam! But 'tis not your fault You are not accountable for the *defects* of *nature* and *education!*

Mrs W. (*Fanning herself.*) Oh, dear! I can't support it—I shall faint—I know I shall!

Maj. (*Cooly, without looking at her.*) You are at full liberty to act as you think proper, ma'am.

Mrs. W. Oh, oh—I'm going—I'm going———

Maj. (*Not looking.*) Well, *go*, ma'am, *go!*

Mrs. W. Oh! oh! [*Sinks upon him, so that he is compelled to support her.*]

Maj. 'Sdeath! [*Aloud to her.*] Ma'am! ma'am! can't you postpone it till you get in doors, ma'am? [*At this moment* Peter White *appears on the hill behind—his cravat loosened, and his whole appearance disordered. Perceiving his Wife in the* Major's *arms, he appears horror-struck, strikes his forehead, and rushes out again, exclaiming* "Brown! Brown!"]

Mrs. W. (*Starting up suddenly from the* Major's *arms.*) You're a brute! a monster! But expect my husband to venge these insults, sir! [*Hurries into Cottage.* R. H.

Pep. What a Xantippe! a perfect Sycorax!

Enter FRANK BROWN, L. H.

Frank. (*Gaily.*) Well, my dear uncle, I hope you are a tle more calm now.

Pep. Calm! No, sir, I'm in a perfect hurricane of passion

Hearkee, sir—do you persist in saying that Mrs. White is perfection personified ?

Frank. I do !

Pep. Then bless your taste, say I ! I have seen her, sir

Frank. Seen her ?

Pep. Yes, and the figure of fun, your child's godfather

Frank. My child's godfather ! [*Smothering a laugh.*]

Pep. Yes, and the sooner you confine him in Bedlam the better.

Frank. (*Aside.*) Egad, there must be some mistake here. [*Aloud, suppressing his laughter.*] So you have seen them, uncle—may I ask where ?

Pep. Why, here, to be sure. They came from the nurse's cottage, little suspecting I was here to confound them—and I must say that your Mrs. White is—ahem !

Frank. (*Aside.*) I see it all now—it must be the *other* Mrs. White and her husband. Egad, 'tis a rare joke ; and if I can only persuade them to keep it up for a time——

Pep. So, sir, as you have thought proper thus to disobey me, you must take the consequences—I have done with you, sir.

Frank. Nay, uncle——

Pep. (*Walking to and fro in anger.*) Not a word, sir—I have done with you for ever—for ever ! [*The* Widow *sings at this moment within—she signs to* Frank *and retires from door*]

Frank. (*Aside, moving towards cottage,* R. H) Now for the tact of my dear Widow to manage him. Meantime, I'll go and explain all to Kitty and the *other* Mrs. White, and try to gain their assistance. [*Exit into cottage,* R. H.

Pep. (*Walking to and fro in front.*) What a dolt was I to leave Devonshire on such an errand, and in the very heart of the coursing season ! [*Stops on hearing the widow sing inside the cottage.*]

Enter WIDOW, *from House,* L. H.

SONG—WIDOW

Let others dwell in stately hall,
And feast 'neath golden canopy :
But let me dwell where torrents brawl,
And zephyrs stir the greenwood tree.
Where the hunter's horn,
At peep of moon,
Comes echoing wild and merrily—
And the red deer bound,
O'er the gleeby ground,

And the mounting lark sings cheerly.
Tallyho! Tallyho!

Pep. (*Delighted.*) Tallyho! ho! Bravo—admirably sung—I could almost fancy myself coursing in Devonshire. I wonder who the fair singer is. A rare wench—one after my own heart!

Wid. (*Singing.*) Tallyho! [*Pretending to know him.*) Ha, Sir Guy Fox—come like a true cavalier to escort me to——[*Here the* Major *turns to her, and she affects surprise.*] A stranger, I declare! a thousand pardons, my dear sir——[*Curtseys.*]

Pep. What a splendid creature! [*Aloud, bowing.*] Nay, madam, 'tis I, rather, who should apologize for stopping to listen to your song, which accords so well with my taste and habits.

Wid. You are a sportsman, then, I presume, sir.

Pep. Yes, madam, heart and soul—although a soldier by profession.

Wid. (*Gaily.*) Nay, the professions are somewhat alike—both *carry arms*, and are *licenced* to *kill*—although you, doubtless, think with me, sir, that shooting *game* is the more pardonable pastime.

Pep. Right, madam, right! [*Aside.*] Egad, she's as witty as she's beautiful. If that rascal Frank, now, had but chosen *such* a woman——

Wid. I, too, am enraptured with the sports of the field, and delight in the pleasures of the chace. 'Twas but last week I rode a day's sport after twenty couple of hounds—staunch tartars as ever barked or run a course—took a flying leap across a stream—dashed through two quicksets, and leaped three five-barred gates!

Pep. (*Pleased, and following her in action in her description.* Bravo!

Wid. We started Reynard before eight—had a view hollow by ten—tallyho, ho, ho!

Pep. (*Delighted*) Tallyho! hark forward! wind him, th villain—wind him!

Wid. At eleven, he took to the water—we plunged after—crossed the Thames——

Pep. That's your sort, neck or nothing—yoicks!

Wid. Up the hill—down the valley—over hedge, ditch, and gate we go, helter skelter. At twelve the whole pack close in with him—you might cover them with a table-cloth——

Pep. (*With action.*) Beautiful—beautiful!

Wid. And we killed him exactly at nineteen minutes, three seconds after one.

Pep. Bravo, bravo! Why, madam, you're a perfect Diana!

Wid. Then at angling, I can kill a trout or salmon with a single hair—and at shooting, strike the spot out of an ace of diamonds.

Pep. (*Delighted.*) You don't say so, madam?

Wid. And at driving a phæton—drive four hunters from London to Bath without once losing the whip hand of the road, and turn them on the breadth of a shilling's edge!

Pep. Why, you're a perfect Olympic charioteer, madam.—[*Aside.*] Zounds, with such a wife, a man might win a fortune in wagers!

Wid. (*Aside, laughing.*) Frank told me his humour, and I flatter myself I have hit it [*To* Major.] And now, sir, may I ask, do you reside in this part of the country?

Pep. No, madam, my estate is in Devonshire, where I should now be enjoying the delightful sport you have so admirably described, but for a hair-brained nephew of mine, who has brought me up to London, where I find he has taken it into his silly head to get married.

Wid. Ah, I understand—a clandestine union.—[*Aside.*]—Frank did not tell me he had gone so far!

Pep. What think you, madam, of such conduct?

Wid. 'Tis highly censurable, no doubt; but love, you know, is a sad tempter to disobedience. [*Sentimentally, gazing at him.*]

Pep. [*Aside.*] Oh lord, I can't stand it—zooks, what a pair of eyes! they're positively unnerving. [*Aloud.*] Now, had he selected one like yourself, madam, he would have had every excuse in his favour. [*Bowing.*]

Wid. (*Curtseying.*) Oh, sir, you———

Pep. Or had I been as fortunate with either of my three wives———

Wid. *Three* wives! what a bold man you must be!

Pep. Egad, so used my comrades to say—for in *matrimony*, as in *war*, I always volunteered for the *forlorn hope*.

Wid. Ha, ha! [*Looking out.*] Bless me! a heavy shower of rain appears to be coming on—will you accept the shelter of my Hermitage until 'tis over? Although I am not quite sure I ought to trust myself with a gentleman who has had three wives. [*Laughingly.*]

Pep. (*Briskly.*) Egad, if I was fortunate enough to find a *fourth* like yourself, madam, I'd make a *quartette* of it tomorrow—I would, by Jupiter—ahem! [*Exeunt into Cottage, the* Major *handing her in courteously a la militaire, singing* "When

the heart of a man is depress'd by care," *&c. during which* Frank *and* Kitty *are seen peeping at them from the Door of the opposite Cottage. They come down.*]

Frank. Bravo! the old sportsman is fairly trapped at last!

Kitty. Yes, he be captivated, Mr. Brown, sure enough. No fools, like old fools! [*Exit into Cottage,* R. H.

Enter PETER, *meeting* FRANK, U. E. R. H.—Frank, R. H.

Pet. (*Starting.*) Ha! Brown, did she say? [*Striding up to* Frank.] Is your name Brown, sir?

Frank. It is, sir.

Pet. Then you're a *willain*!

Frank. (*Affecting anger.*) Sir, that's a hard word!

Pet. Hard or soft, I repeat it. Fire and fury, sir, an't you afeard I should *hannihilate* you on the spot? [Frank *smiles.*] Mrs. White, sir—Mrs. White! [*Stamping.*]

Frank. And what have you to do with that lady, eh, sir?—[*Affecting anger.*]

Pet. (*Laughing wildly.*) Ha, ha, ha! hear this, ye gods! [*Bitterly.*] You love her—you know you do!

Frank. (*Following* Peter, *who retreats.*) Dare you presume to question my right to love her? You're a rival, I suppose?

Pet. I should think I am!

Frank. Pshaw! don't make a fool of yourself! [*Turns from him and walks to and fro.*]

Pet. (*Following him about, closely.*) But, sir——

Frank. Nonsense!

Pet. I am——

Frank. Ridiculous! [*Still walking,*]

Pet. (*Following.*) I'll have satisfaction, sir—I say satisfaction, sir—there's my card, sir! [*Thrusts it over* Frank's *shoulder*—Frank *stops suddenly, takes* Peter's *card, places it on the palm of his hand, and blows it into* Peter's *face, exclaiming* "Pho!" *and laughing aside.*]

Pet. (*Bewildered.*) The world's at an end, and chaos is come again! But I'll have *wengeance*—I'll raise the whole neighbourhood—all Europe shall know a *hinjured* husband's wrongs! [*Ascends the Stage, calling.*] Hollo! every body—murder—thieves—abduction—seduction—and *pretty* larceny! *Enter hastily from both Cottages,* MAJOR PEPPER *and* KITTY.

Pep. Eh—what's the matter?

Pet. (*Wildly.*) Ha, ha! I have you both now. [*Seizing the Major by the collar with his left hand.*] You are the *old one* what old me of it—[*Sizing* Frank *with the right hand.*]—and you

are the *young one* what did it. [Frank *laughs*, Peter *shaking him by the collar.*]

Pep. What the deuce is the meaning——

Pet. (*Calling.*) What ho! Mrs. White—Mrs. White—come forth, I say——[*Here the* Widow *and* Mrs. White *enter hastily from the two Cottages.*]

Wid. and Mrs. W. (*Together,*) Here I am——[*Short pause.* Peter *releases the* Major *and* Frank, *and rushes towards his Wife, then pauses suddenly, looks at her, and exclaims in a sentimenoal tone—*

Pet. Oh, Clementina, have I deserved this of you? [*Striking his forehead.*]

Mrs. W. Nay, my dear Peter———

Pet. (*Averting his head.*) Away! away! "Go to a nunnery—go!—go!—"

Mrs. W. 'Tis all a mistake, Peter, I assure you.

Kit. It be, indeed, sir—come this way, and I'll tell you all about it. [Kitty *and* Mrs. White *endeavour to lead him away—he puts them aside and walks towards the back striking his forehead and gesticulating. They follow and appear to be explaining the affair to him, while* Pepper, Frank, *and the* Widow *remain in front conversing.*]

Pep. (*To Frank.*) There, there, you may spare your pains young gentleman, the widow has confessed all; and 'tis lucky for you that you have so *fair* an excuse for the deception you have practised on me.

Frank. May I then hope to be forgiven?

Wid. Nay, that was our condition, Major, was it not? [*Placing her hand upon his arm.*] and a soldier's word is his bond.

Pep. Zooks! there is no resisting that bewitching smile.—There, take her, Frank. If I had such a prize in view I should certainly———

Wid. (*Laughingly.*) Complete the *quartette* of the Mrs. Peppers—eh Major?

Pep. Ha! ha! Go to, your'e a Syren.

Wid. A very Widow, eh, Major? [*Laughing, then looking towards* Peter *&c.*] So, it seems my namesake and her spouse are friends again. [Peter, Mrs. White, *and* Kitty *advance.*]

Pet. (*Laughing*) Ecod—'tis a comical mistake! But I was preciously frightened tho'! so, there are *two* Mrs. Whites,—and you are not the *Dandy Perfumer* after all. [*To Frank.*]

Frank. No, indeed, sir! But I have to apologize to your good lady for the liberty I took in making her my wife for an hour.

Mrs W. No apology, Sir, I beg—'twas ratner a compliment than a liberty! [*Curtseying, then aside.*] What a handsome fellow!

Pet. (*To Frank.*) Well, I never bear malice; so there's my hand; and what's more, I *inwite* you to my son's christening.—Dear little fellow, you shall see him. [*Runs into Cottage* R. H.]

Pep. (*Delighted.*) Frank, your'e a lucky dog; and if you don't make such a wife happy, you deserve to be made the most miserable husband in Christendom.

Frank. Trust me, uncle, I know the value of the treasure I am about to possess. [*At this moment* Peter White *Enters from the Cottage, carrying in his arms a child in long clothes.*

Pet. (*Coming down* L. H.) Ladies and gentlemen, allow me the pleasure of introducing to you *Master* Peter, my son and heir, who will, with your permission, when able to spout, have the honour of making you a speech, and return you his respectful thanks for your kind reception of his *Pa!* and *Ma!*

THE CURTAIN FALLS.